

San Francisco's Safe Medicine Disposal Pilot Program

Program Administration & Background

San Francisco's Safe Medicine Disposal Pilot Program launched in April 2012. San Francisco's Department of the Environment (SF Environment) currently administers the Pilot Program in cooperation with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). Grant funding from Genentech and PhRMA partially support the Pilot Program.

Currently thirteen drop-off sites (12 independent pharmacies and one community center) host collection bins for residents to deposit non-controlled substances including prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, liquid medicines, medicated ointments, pet medicines, nutritional supplements, and undispensed auto-injectors (for example, expired "epi-pens"). Residents can pour pills directly into the collection bin or consolidate them into a ziplock bag before placing them in the drop-box, but keep liquid medicine in its original container.

All ten San Francisco police stations accept controlled substances such as Vicodin®, OxyContin®, Percocet®, Ritalin®, Adderall®, Xanax®, Valium®, etc. Police stations also accept non-controlled substances. At a police station, residents hand all medicines to the officer on duty who receives them according to established evidence procedures.

Role of Participating Pharmacies

Participating pharmacies volunteer to host a collection container for residents who wish to dispose of non-controlled prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as nutritional supplements, pet medicines, empty inhaler cartridges, and/or pre-loaded syringes. Residents are invited to deposit medicines in the collection container during business hours only.

Secure Metal Collection Container

Participating pharmacies decide where to site the mailbox-style collection container. The container can be mounted to the floor or wall if desired by the host pharmacy. This container has two openings, the drop-box opening is used by residents to deposit medicine and the front panel opening is only used by authorized parties to remove medicine for disposal. To ensure the front panel is only accessed by authorized parties, the State-Licensed Medical Waste Hauler keeps one key, and the participating pharmacy keeps the other key, so the medicine is only accessible when both parties are present.



Collection Container



Dual-Key Lock



Medicine Removal

The container used in the Pilot Program is 19 inches wide by 42 inches tall by 19 inches deep, as manufactured by DVault. This container meets guidelines developed by the California Board of Pharmacy along with the California Integrated Waste Management Board and other stakeholders: <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/homehazwaste/Medications/ModelProgram/default.htm>

Medical Waste Generator Permit

California's Model Guidelines (above) recommend that collection locations for home-generated medicines be registered with the local health department as a best management practice. Under the Pilot Program, the Department of the Environment registers interested pharmacies as a medical waste generator with the San Francisco Department of Public Health and pays the required registration fees. A copy of the Medical Waste Generator Permit is maintained at the Department of the Environment and is on file at each participating pharmacy.

Participating Pharmacy Responsibilities

- Designate a staff person to regularly communicate with the Department of the Environment
- Train all pharmacy employees about collection procedures once each year
- Post the required signage advertising the collection bin
- Welcome residents to access the collection container during business hours
- Keep a key to unlock the bin when the hauler arrives for regularly scheduled pick-ups
- Call the hauler directly if the collection container fills before the regularly scheduled pick-up date
- Report any instances of abandoned waste to 311 and the Department of the Environment
- Keep documentation of training (provided by the Department of the Environment), Medical Waste Generator Permit (provided by the Department of the Environment) and hauler pick-up receipts (provided by the State-Licensed Medical Waste Hauler) on file

Collections to Date – 44,108 lbs –22 TONS (through October 2014)

